Pending cauge conversion works

*646. PROF. M. M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of proposals for gauge conversion from different States, pending with Government;

(b) the present status of these proposals; and

(c) the details of target fixed for completion of the above projects?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) and (b) There are two number of gauge conversion proposals pending with the Government, *viz.*, Naupada-Gunupur and Sriganganagar-Sarupsar MG sections. These projects were included in the Railway, Budget with the proviso that work would be taken up after obtaining requisite clearances. Both the proposals have already been appraised/ considered by Planning Commission & Expanded Board. These are now to be considered by the Government.

(c) No target date for completion of these projects have been fixed.

KVKs in Assam

*647. SHRI URKHAO GWRA BRAHMA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to start some Krishi Vigyan Kendras in the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) areas of Assam; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Indian Council of Agricultural Research has established Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) in Kokrajhar and Sonitpur districts, and strengthened the existing Zonal Agricultural Research Station in Kamrup district to take up the additional functions of KVK in BAC areas of Assam.

It has been agreed to establish new KVKs in three districts *viz.*, Barpeta, Nalbari and Bongaigaon in favour of Assam Agricultural University. The process of starting these KVKs has been initiated.

Agricultural Reforms

*648. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to focus on raising agricultural productivity through cost-reduction technologies in the foodgrain sector;

(b) if so, the details of reforms sought; and

(c) the strategies adopted/devised in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. The reduction of cost per unit of output by increased crop productivity and judicious use of inputs in the major focus of research under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

(b) and (c) Protection of plant varieties and farmers rights, greater emphasis on rural infrastructural development including market research, availability of quality inputs, larger investment in agricultural research, use of biotechnological tools, creation of auxiliary services, crop health counseling, facilities for essential farm machineries, liberal credit policies, organized seed production, committed extension services and participation of private sector in agriculture research and development need special focus for enhancing agricultural production and productivity. Development of nutrient use efficient genotypes coupled with resistance to biotic and abiotic stresses, use of integrated nutrient and pest management technologies, introduction of hybrid technology, adoption of zero tillage and resource conservative technologies, appropriate mechanization of various agricultural operations, crop substitution and diversification will help in enhancing production, productivity and profitability of the farmers.